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The Case of Northern Epirus

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The author of this article is Director of the Pan-Epirotic Union, an organization for making known the aspirations of the Greeks of Epirus. He presents here the Greek side of the case, backing up the claims laid before the Peace Conference by M. Venizelos.

IN 1913 the Greek Army occupied Epirus as far north as Chimara, Korytza, and Lake Ochrida. Mme. Jeanne Leune and M. René Puaux, both correspondents of the Temps of Paris, bear witness that the people of Epirus received the Greek forces with enthusiasm as liberators and brothers. M. Puaux, who is now in the Cabinet of M. Clemenceau, in his book, "La Malheureuse Epire," extols the Hellenic sentiment of the Epirotes and appeals to France to lend her influence for the union of Epirus with Greece.

Italy and Austria, covetors of Albania and Epirus, sent an ultimatum to Greece to withdraw her troops from Northern Epirus.

At the Ambassadorial Conference of London in 1913 two-thirds of Epirus was annexed to the Albanian State. In 1914 the Greek troops began to evacuate Northern Epirus, despite the universal entreaties of the Northern Epirotes to stay. No sooner had the Greek Army departed than the inhabitants, Christians and Mussulmans, broke out into revolution and defeated the Moslem Gheghs of the Prince of Wied.

Colonel Murray of the British Army made a tour of three months, and covered most of Northern Epirus. His lectures on "Northern Epirus in 1914" gave proof that the Northern Epirote revolution was spontaneous and against the will of M. Venizelos. The enemies of the Epirotes have attempted to diminish the significance of this outbreak of national aspirations by stating that the Greek Government suborned the Epirotes to revolt; but the Governments of Italy and Austria, the principal parties interested in an Albanian Northern Epirus, have officially admitted that the Government of Greece acquitted itself honorably in the case, fulfilling every stipulation of the Conference of London. The Epirotes rose unassisted and fought for their rights and liberties until even the Triple Alliance was forced to recognize in 1914, in the Protocol of Corfu, the autonomy of Northern Epirus and the Greek character of the Epirotes.

Arnold Toynbee, in "New Europe" and in "Greek Policies Since 1882," writes: "They are Greeks, like any one else, but some of them happen to speak Albanian. * * * The Epirote has become Greek in soul. Hellenism and nationality have become for him identical

ideas, and, when at last the hour of deliverance struck, he welcomed the Greek armies that marched into his country from the south and from the east, after the fall of Jannina, in 1913, with the same enthusiasm with which the islanders of Crete or of Chios welcomed them."

René Puaux, in "La Malheureuse Epire," says: "It was a travesty of justice to put the Epirotes at the mercy of the Moslem majority on the ground that they happened to speak the same language. To surrender to an artificial Albanian people which differs from the Albanians in language, in civilization, in religion, and in aspirations is a crime. All Epirus from Cape St. Basil to Cape St. John is absolutely Greek; and their friends and relatives constitute the intellectual and plutocratic aristocracy of Athens and Patras."

The Turkish census of 1908, previous to the first Young Turk Parliamentary election, gives the population of Epirus as 311,000 Greeks and 176,000 Albanians, Turks, and Jews.

There are in Epirus 950 elementary Greek schools, with 28,820 pupils; three colleges for boys, (Jannina, Konitza, Korytza;) and one college for girls, (Jannina;) 2,000 Greek churches; 189 Greek monasteries—all self-supported and endowed by Epirotes who have made fortunes abroad.

Korytza, the city which the Albanians refer to as the centre of Albanian culture, maintains one Greek college for boys, with 100 pupils; one Greek girls' high school, with 750 girls; two Greek kindergartens, with 700 children. In all, in a city of 25,000, there are 2,200 boys and girls attending Greek schools, where instruction in Greek is given by ten professors, fifteen male and fourteen female teachers, and four kindergarten instructors. The total appropriation made by the city for this instruction was, in 1914, 70,000 francs.

In the District of Korytza, with a Christian population of over 43,000, there are maintained 120 Greek schools, with 180 Greek teachers and 12,500 Greek pupils of both sexes. The Albanians have in Korytza only one girls' school, with forty girls.

The Epirotes support the school by local taxation and through the endowments of rich Epirotes, like Baron Sinas, who acquired his wealth in Vienna and left his millions for Greek schools at Korytza and for the erection and maintenance of the splendid academy at Athens. John Bangas of Korytza, who died twenty years ago, left 2,000,000 francs in the National Bank of Greece, and from the interest on this money 20,000 francs yearly are used for the maintenance of the Greek College of Korytza. Anastassius Adamides, likewise of Korytza, has built the Church of St. George, has founded and endowed the two high schools for boys, and has established a drug store where the poor citizens of Korytza get medicines gratis. He also has left in the National Bank of Greece large sums of money, the interest of which is used to enable poor and deserving Greek girls of Korytza to marry with a dower. Other public-spirited citizens of Korytza have performed similar services. What has prompted these benefactors to leave their fortunes for Greek culture, unless it be their Greek conscience?

But the Epirotes have not made Epirus alone a country where Greek letters and Greek learning are intensely cultivated. They have endowed Athens with the Academy, with the Rhizarion Theological Seminary, with the Arsakion College for Girls, (where 3,000 Greek girls receive higher instructions each year.) The Observatory at Athens, the National Greek

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University, the Polytechnic Institute, the Military Academy, the famous Greek Stadium, the modern Prison of Averoff, the battleship Averoff, the Zographion at Constantinople, (a Greek college,) and other princely gifts are the contributions of Epirotes.

Amadori Virgili, an Italian officer charged with the task of organizing Italian propaganda in Epirus in order to Albanicize the Epirotes, wrote in 1908 in La Questione Rumeliota: "The Christians hate the Albanian language; the Mussulmans do not care for it at all." M. Puaux wrote:

"The Epirotes are more Greek than the Greeks themselves." It is to be hoped that this intensely Hellenic province will be ultimately united with Greece.

MAP OF GREECE, INCLUDING EPIRUS—AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER. THE BLACK AREA INDICATES THE TERRITORY INHABITED BY GREEKS. THE WHITE LINE REPRESENTS THE GREEK CLAIMS PRESENTED BY MR. VENIZELOS AT PARIS AND THE SHADED AREA LANDS WHERE THE GREEK AND TURKISH RACES ARE IN EQUAL NUMBERS

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